Bandsaw Fences for Re-sawing

Excerpts from the Messageboards

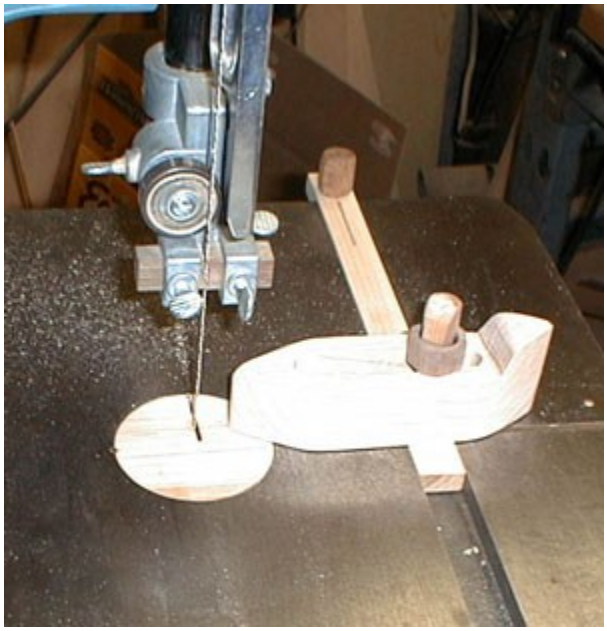
Ellis Walentine: I used to have a fence for my old Walker Turner bandsaw, and I don't ever recall using it. My aversion to bandsaw fences stems from the fact that if your blade leads a bit, the fence should follow the angle of the lead, or else the cutting pressure can mess up the cut in one direction or the other. If you like the idea of a straight fence, you can make an L-shaped plywood fence that you clamp to the front and back of the table once you've figured out how much lead to allow for. For resawing, I prefer a "point fence," which provides a single vertical point of contact even with and parallel to the blade you're using. Clamp it to the table and you have a fixed width of cut. If the blade leads, you can adjust the angle of feed. A point fence can be an L-shaped plywood fence as tall as the piece you're resawing, with another piece screwed inside the L for clamping to the table. I use something simpler than that (see pic)...a 3 x 8 (my saw has an 8" resaw capacity) about 9" long that is perfectly square in all directions. I cut a couple bevels on one end so I can reverse it or lay it flat for shorter cuts.

Paul Anthony: I think you'll find that a shop-made wooden fence works just fine for resawing. Mine is L-shaped, and made from thick, straight hardwood. The horizontal section of the L allows clamping the fence to the bandsaw table. The biggest problem with resawing is accommodating "blade drift"--the blade's tendency to pull to one side or the other. One way of dealing with drift is to use a single-point fence,

as Ellis suggests. The problem I find with a single-point fence is that--for me, at least, it doesn't yield pieces as consistently thick as will a properly set up straight fence. If your saw is tuned properly and the fence set to accommodate drift, you shouldn't have a problem resawing. Here are a few general resawing tips that may help:

- Use the widest blade your saw will accept, and tension it so there is no more than 1/4-in. flex with the blade guides set at maximum height. New blades cut and track the best.
- Set the thrust bearings just a few thousandths of an inch behind the blade.
- Set the guide blocks a few thousands of an inch (the thickness of a dollar bill) to the sides of the blade, and just behind the tooth gullets.
- Make a tall, flat, straight fence, and set it to the angle of your blade drift. (See below.)
- Saw using steady, even feed pressure, holding the workpiece firmly against the fence just in front of the blade. Pull the last inch or so through from the outfeed side of the saw.
- Before making each subsequent slice from a workpiece, joint the face that will abut the fence.

Setting the drift Angle:

1. Gauge a line parallel to the straight edge of a piece of scrap about 20 inches long.
2. Carefully cut freehand to the line, stopping about halfway through the cut. Without changing the feed angle, hold the scrap firmly to the table, and turn the saw off.
3. Trace the straight edge of the scrap onto the bandsaw table using a fine-tipped felt marker.
4. Set the fence parallel to your marked line at a distance equal to the desired resaw thickness plus about 1/32 in., and clamp it in place.
5. Test the setup using scrap. The blade should track nicely without pulling the workpiece into or away from the fence. Adjust the fence angle as necessary to fine-tune the drift angle.

Stephen Shepherd: If you have a long fence, you can not crab into the cut if the grain causes the blade to wander. Try using a single point rip fence.